

Message Text

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22

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-02 AID-05 /018 W
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P 050111Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6591

DEA HQS WASHDC PRIORITY

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S/NM FOR VANCE; AID/SER/INC FOR WAMPLER; DEA EOI FOR CUSACK;
DEA STTS FOR SHELDON-SCHLESINGER; DEA SAO FOR SWANK

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, MEX

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR REPLACEMENT OF CRASHED MODEL 212
AND 206-B HELICOPTERS: SUMMARY OF CRASH-RELATED EVENTS

REF: A) STATE 175267, B) MEXICO 9044, C) MEXICO 8976

1. SUMMARY: DURING MEETING WITH AG SENIOR STAFF ON 15 JULY WITH SPECTRAL DATA CORPORATION (SDC) REPRESENTATIVES TO DISCUSS OPERATION OF SECOND MOPSS, DR GERTZ CONFIRMED A TOTAL OF 12 FATALITIES IN CRASH OF MODEL 212, XC-GUF, ON 13 JULY IN THE STATE OF MICHOACAN AND TWO FATALITIES IN CRASH OF MODEL 206-B, XC-GIR, THE SAME DATE IN THE STATE OF TAMAULIPAS. BOTH AIRCRAFT ARE TOTAL LOSSES. ALTHOUGH DR GERTZ REQUESTED REPLACEMENT OF BOTH AIRCRAFT, STEERING COMMITTEE HOLDING THIS REQUEST IN ABEYANCE PENDING FURTHER CONSIDERATION. END SUMMARY.

2. MODEL 212 CRASH: XC-GUF: NAU PROGRAM OFFICER MET WITH SOLIS AT HIS RESIDENCE ON NIGHT OF 16 JULY WITH CAPT VIDEZ AND LT PLATA. SOLIS UNDERScoreD THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER OF MECHANICAL FAILURE. TESTIMONY BY EHI PILOT GOODE AND CAPT ABLANEDO, WHO WERE FLYING MICROFOIL SPRAY SHIP, XC-BEI, AS PART OF TWO-SHIP SPRAY TEAM, INDICATES CAPT RAMIREZ PULIDO DID NOT EXERCISE THE BEST JUDGEMENT WHEN HE

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TURNED INTO A LOW-HANGING CLOUD FORMATION. HIS AIRCRAFT

STRUCK A PROTRUDING RIDGELINE OBSCURED BY THE CLOUDS AT APPROXIMATELY 85 TO 90 MPH. SOLIS CONCLUDES THE ACCIDENT OCCURRED AS SIMPLY AS THAT. NOTHING MORE.

A. THE CRASH OCCURRED JUST BEFORE NOON WHILE CAPT RAMIREZ PULIDO, WITH A MIX OF ELEVEN PASSENGERS, BOTH MILITARY AND AG PERSONNEL, WAS FLYING SECURITY ESCORT DURING MARIHUANA ERADICATION OPERATION IN AN AREA JUST SOUTH OF APATZINGAN. SOLIS STATES THE COORDINATOR (AGENTE DE MINISTERIO PUBLICO PANTOJA FONSECA) HAD INSISTED ON THE MISSION FOR THAT MORNING NOTWITHSTANDING THAT CAPT RAMIREZ PULIDO PREFERRED TO ABORT THE MISSION DUE TO THE WEATHER CONDITIONS AT THE 7,000 FOOT ALTITUDE AREA WHICH HAD TO BE CROSSED TO APPROACH THE FIELDS TO BE SPRAYED.

B. SOLIS FURTHER STATES THE AME COORDINATOR HAD DRAWN UP CHARGES AGAINST ANOTHER PILOT RECENTLY FOR DERELICTION OF DUTY IN REFUSING TO FLY A MISSION. ON THE MORNING OF 13 JULY, BOTH THE PILOT AND COORDINATOR AGREED THAT A CESSNA 185 RECON FLIGHT WOULD DETERMINE THE ACTUAL WEATHER CONDITIONS IN THE TACTICAL AREA AND A FINAL DECISION TO SPRAY WOULD BE MADE BASED ON THE FINDINGS. THE DECISION WAS MADE TO LAUNCH LATER IN THE MORNING AND BOTH MODEL 212S WERE IN CONTINUOUS RADIO CONTACT TRYING TO FIND THE BEST PASS THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS TO REACH THE REPORTED FIELDS.

C. THE TWO PILOTS IN SECURITY SHIP, XC-BEI, STATED THEY WERE APPROACHING A HEAVY CLOUD FORMATION AT APPROXIMATELY 7,000 FEET, AND THEY BANKED TO THE RIGHT AND XC-GUF BANKED TO THE LEFT AND WAS ENGULFED IN THE CLOUDS AT THE LAST MOMENT THEY SAW THE SHIP. RADIO CONTACT WAS BROKEN AND XC-BEI RETURNED TO THE GENERAL AREA. THEY SPOTTED A BALL OF BLACK SMOKE RISING THROUGH THE CLOUDS AND CIRCLED IN AN EFFORT TO FIND A LANDING ZONE; HOWEVER, THE AREA WAS TOTALLY INACCESSIBLE FOR LANDING. THEY REPORTED BY RADIO AND REMAINED ALOFT IN THE AREA TO ASCERTAIN IF THERE WERE ANY VISIBLE SIGNS OF SURVIVORS. THEY NOTED DEBRIS WAS SCATTERED DOWNHILL FOR APPROXIMATELY 100 YARDS AND CAME TO REST AT THE BASE OF THE FAIRLY STEEP LEDGE.

D. DURING THE RECOVERY OPERATIONS ON 14 AND 15 JULY, THE BODIES WERE LITERALLY CARRIED OUT OF THE CRASH SITE AND FLOWN BACK BY XC-BEI TO APATZINGAN WHICH IS THE 6TH BATTALION MILITARY ZONE HEADQUARTERS. THE TWELVE FATALITIES IN THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CRASH REPRESENT THE MOST TRAGIC AVIATION DISASTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE AG AERO SERVICES. FYI: DURING THE WEEKLY MEETINGS WHEN BHC TEAM WAS SETTling DOWN IN THE THIRD QUARTER OF CY-75, THE PILOTS PRESENTED A TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION RELATED TO WHO HAS THE FINAL AUTHORITY TO DECIDE WHEN A MISSION SHOULD BE ABORTED IN CASE OF HAZARDOUS WEATHER CONDITIONS. AT THE TIME, CAPT VIDEZ STAUNCHLY DEFENDED THE POSITION THAT IT WAS AN EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE

COMMAND PILOT. END FYI.

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-02 AID-05 /018 W

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P 050111Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6592

DEA HQS WASHDC PRIORITY

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S/NM FOR VANCE; AID/SER/INC FOR WAMPLER; DEA EOI FOR CUSACK;
DEA STTS FOR SHELDON-SCHLESINGER; DEA SAO FOR SWANK

3. MODEL 206-B CRASH: ON 13 JULY, CAPT EDUARDO ARROYO LARRAINZAR WAS ORDERED TO FLY XC-GIR TO THE SOUTHERN ZONE OF THE STATE OF TAMAULIPAS TO PARTICIPATE IN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS CAUSED BY THE FLOODING OF RIVERS DUE TO HEAVY RAINS. PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA HAD DECLARED THIS AND OTHER STATES AS MAJOR DISASTER AREAS.

A. THERE ARE NO WITNESSES TO THE CRASH OF XC-GIR; HOWEVER, IT IS KNOWN THAT THE SON OF THE MAYOR OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF EL MANTE, STATE OF TAMAULIPAS, WAS FLYING WITH CAPT ARROYO. RADIO CONTACT WAS LOST WITH XC-GIR SOMETIME IN THE EARLY EVENING HOURS ON 13 JULY. (SAME DATE AS XC-GUF CRASH)

B. CAP ARROYO IS REPORTED TO HAVE MADE AN EMERGENCY LANDING CLOSE TO THE PROXIMITY OF EL MANTE DURING A HEAVY RAINSTORM. AT THE TIME, HE HAD THREE PASSENGERS ON BOARD WHO WERE SERVING AS SPOTTERS DURING THE SEARCH-RESCUE OPERATIONS. TWO OF THE PASSENGERS DISEMBARKED AND INFORMED CAPT ARROYO THEY PREFERRED TO OVERNIGHT AT THE SITE WHEN CAPT ARROYO INDICATED HE PLANNED TO FLY IN TO EL MANTE AS ACTUAL FLIGHT TIME WAS UNDER FIVE MINUTES. THE THIRD PASSENGER REMAINED ON BOARD AND DECIDED TO FLY TO THE CITY OF EL MANTE.

C. THE FOLLOWING DAY A SEARCH AIRCRAFT SPOTTED THE TAILBOOM STICKING OUT OF A FLOODED AREA IN THE PROXIMITY OF THE EL MANTE RIVER. LT PLATA INFORMED NAU OFFICER DURING TALKS AT SOLIS' RESIDENCE THAT CAPT ARROYO SUSTAINED

EXTENSIVE HEAD AND CHEST INJURIES AND APPARENTLY DIED UPON
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IMPACT AS HIS BODY WAS STILL STRAPPED TO SEAT WHEN RECOVERED
ON 14 JULY. THE ONLY EVIDENCE AS TO CAUSE OF CRASH INDICATES
PILOT TURNED ON LANDING LIGHT WHICH DISTORTED HIS ALTITUDE
PERCEPTION AND CAUSED HIM TO FLY INTO WATER.

D. THE BODY OF THE MAYOR'S SON WAS RECOVERED MUCH LATER
AS THE SWIFT CURRENT OF THE FLOOD WATERS IMPEDED EFFORTS.
SUBSEQUENT REPORTS INDICATE THE SHIP WAS DRAGGED CONSIDER-
ABLY BY THE CURRENT AND WAS TOTALLY SUBMERGED. SALVAGE
OPERATIONS HAD TO WAIT FOR WATERS TO RECEDE; HOWEVER,
LT PLATA INFORMED US ONLY SOME AVIONICS WERE SALVAGED AS
SHIP WAS TORN APART BY SWIFT CURRENT.

4. LETTER OF CONDOLENCE CITED IN REF (A) WAS DRAFTED PER
GUIDELINES AND TRANSMITTED TO AG OJEDA PAULLADA ON 16 JULY.

5. BURIAL SERVICES FOR ONLY TWO OF THE VICTIMS WERE HELD IN
MEXICO CITY ON 15 JULY AS OTHERS WERE BURIED IN THEIR HOME
TOWNS IN DIVERSE PARTS OF THE REPUBLIC. DEA AND NAU REP-
RESENTATIVES ATTENDED THE JOINT FUNERAL SERVICES FOR CAPT
ARROYO LARRAINZAR AND MECHANIC ZAMORA RUBIO.

6. REPLACEMENT OF MODEL 212 AND MODEL 206-B: SINCE U.S.G.
IS ALREADY COMMITTED TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL MODEL 212 AND
THREE MORE MODEL 206-B UNDER THE TERMS OF THE 30 JUNE 76
LETTER OF AGREEMENT, STEERING COMMITTEE PROPOSES TO DEFER
FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH AG OFFICE ON REPLACEMENT OF THE
TWO MOST RECENTLY CRASHED ROTARY WING AIRCRAFT. AVIATION
ADVISOR BELIEVES CURRENT AG HELICOPTER INVENTORY SUFFICIENT
TO MEET ANTICIPATED ERADICATION REQUIREMENTS SINCE CAMPAIGN
IS TO BEGIN EARLIER AND SHOULD HAVE BETTER INTELLIGENCE FROM
INCREASED MOPS MISSIONS. MISSION WILL, HOWEVER, KEEP WATCH
ON CAMPAIGN AND RECOMMEND REPLACEMENT IF EARLY STAGES OF
ERADICATION CAMPAIGN SUFFERS IN ANY WAY FROM INADEQUATE
AIRCRAFT. (REPLACEMENT, IF NECESSARY, COULD ALSO PROVIDE
ENTREE TO NEW ADMINISTRATION.
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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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Disposition History: n/a
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